

VZCZCXYZ0002
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSG #0686/01 1162135
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 262135Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1411
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 1706
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 3598
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 0237
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1359
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 5042
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 1680
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SANTIAGO 000686

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR R/MR, I/PP, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, INR/IAA, PM, INL
STATE FOR INR/R/MR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [PGOV](#) [ETRD](#) [CI](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - POSITIVE COVERAGE OF WHA A/S SHANNON'S
REMARKS IN CHILE

¶1. Summary: Santiago dailies gave prominent coverage to WHA A/S Thomas Shannon at a press roundtable on April 26. The press highlighted his remarks about Chile's ability to promote dialogue and cooperation, "build bridges" in the region, and its linkages to other economies in Asia and North America. Answering questions about President Bachelet's declining popularity, A/S Shannon underscored Chile's accomplishments, including its advanced investment climate, its rule of law, and mechanisms to resolve conflicts. Several dailies noted the excellent state of the U.S.-Chile relationship and that the United States "fully respects Chile's handling of its relations with Venezuela." The media also highlighted his optimism about the future of the Americas. End Summary.

¶2. "El Mercurio," conservative, influential newspaper-of-record (circ. 129,000) headline: "Thomas Shannon Highlights Chile's Role in the Region and is Optimistic about Latin America's Future."

¶3. "For Washington, Chile has a leadership role in the Pacific and is exercising its diplomacy actively and positively," said Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Thomas Shannon.

SIPDIS

"President Bachelet has a very important presence in the region, which was obvious in her visit to Venezuela and also in her meetings with several presidents, which shows a very active diplomacy.... But what is most interesting from our viewpoint is that Chile is a leader in building bridges with the more dynamic economies of Asia and North America.... The important thing in the region is to open space for dialogue and cooperation. In this regard, Chile's role has been important because it seeks consensus and understands how democracy can be successful with a social agenda."

¶4. Shannon also said the United States "fully respects the way in which Chile is handling its relations with Venezuela." On former President Lagos' remarks about "Chavismo" and his big checkbook, the Assistant Secretary said, "Lagos is a man with much experience and wisdom who understands the region very well, so when he speaks I listen and learn."

¶5. Highlighted quote: "Since Bachelet took office, we've taken important steps to strengthen our excellent bilateral relation."

¶6. "La Tercera," conservative, independent (circ. 101,000) headlined: "Shannon Reiterates Support for Uribe."

¶7. Assistant Secretary Thomas Shannon highlighted what Colombian

President Alvaro Uribe has accomplished rather than the scandal over his ties to paramilitary forces. Shannon said Uribe has accomplished important things, "such as recapturing territory from the guerilla and beginning the demilitarization process of the paramilitaries." He emphasized that the information about the paramilitary scandal has been made known as part of an ongoing investigation where charges have been filed against those responsible. The Assistant Secretary also said Latin America is "an effervescent region with which the United States wants to cooperate."

¶8. "La Nacion, government-owned, editorially independent (circ. 4,200): "Shannon: The Region is on the Right Path"

¶9. Assistant Secretary Thomas Shannon expressed optimism about the region's future. "I believe the region is on the right path. Of course there are specific problems among countries, which are normal...." The important thing is the way in which countries resolve those problems," he said. Shannon underscored that Washington is willing to assist Ecuador, which is looking for ways to perfect its democracy. About Chile he said, "If there is something that truly defines the relationship between the United States and Chile, it is a deep respect for what Chile has accomplished, politically, economically, and socially."

¶10. Highlighted quote: "The important thing is to not focus on particular occurrences such as 'Chavismo,' but rather on strengthening cooperation among nations," said Shannon.

¶11. Conservative, afternoon "La Segunda" (4/25, circ. 33,000): Assistant Secretary Thomas Shannon described the U.S.-Chile bilateral relationship as "useful and fruitful" and said that since President Bachelet took office, "important steps have been taken to make those ties even more stable." Shannon said Bachelet has shown a "consistent and intelligent policy with the United States."

¶12. "The Santiago Times" (English language on-line service)

reported: "A/S Shannon addressed broader trends in Latin America and argued that strengthening the region's democratic institutions was his primary concern. "The region is on the right path. It is a region that is open to democracy, but we must now try and see how we can strengthen democratic institutions so that Latin American are not just political citizens, but also citizens in a social and economic sense.

¶13. We have to show that democracy is worth the effort," said Shannon. "And we have to make sure that governments in the region can create jobs." When asked about the strong anti-Americanism that stretches from the Canadian arctic to the Chilean Patagonia, Shannon said the best way to improve the perception of the U.S. was to maintain involvement in the region. "Our experience is that our image improves whenever we are in a country and working."

¶14. As the conversation shifted to Chile's relationship with the United States, Shannon had nothing but praise. "We have a great relationship with Chile, and since President Bachelet came to power we have taken steps to enhance that relationship. Bachelet has been very helpful in helping us understand the social climate in Latin America. Our countries have a common understanding of how democracy works and how economic policies can be used to enhance democratic participation," said the diplomat.

KELLY